
**OFFICE OF THE SPECIAL INSPECTOR GENERAL
FOR AFGHANISTAN RECONSTRUCTION**

**INSPECTION OF ABDUL MANAN SECONDARY SCHOOL
CONSTRUCTION PROJECT IN KAPISA PROVINCE:
INSUFFICIENT PLANNING, SAFETY PROBLEMS, AND POOR
QUALITY CONTROL AFFECT PROJECT RESULTS**



October 26, 2009

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SPECIAL INSPECTOR GENERAL FOR AFGHANISTAN RECONSTRUCTION
400 Army Navy Drive
Arlington, Virginia 22202

October 26, 2009

MEMORANDUM FOR: Commander, United States Forces-Afghanistan

Commander, Combined Joint Task Force-82

SUBJECT: SIGAR Inspection Report 10-2: Inspection of Abdul Manan Secondary School Construction Project in Kapisa Province: Insufficient Planning, Safety Problems, and Poor Quality Control Affect Project Results

This report provides observations, findings, and recommendations of an inspection of a school construction project funded by the Commander's Emergency Response Program, and managed by the Kapisa Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT). This inspection focused on the management, design, and construction work for the Abdul Manan School located in the Nijrab District of Kapisa Province. This project cost the U.S. government approximately \$250,000 dollars. It is one of 12 school construction projects initiated by the Kapisa PRT during the past 18 months.

The Office of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) conducted the inspection between June and August 2009. A summary of our report is on page ii. When preparing the final report, we considered written comments submitted by United States Forces-Afghanistan and incorporated information provided from these comments, as appropriate, into the report. These comments are reprinted in Appendix C of this report.

The inspection was conducted under the authority of Public Law 110-181 and the Inspector General Act of 1978, as amended; and performed in accordance with the Quality Standards for Inspections issued by the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency.

Very respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Guy Sands-Pingot", is located below the "Very respectfully," text.

Guy Sands-Pingot
Assistant Inspector General for Inspections
Office of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction



SIGAR

Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction

Summary of Report: SIGAR Inspection 10-2 October 26, 2009 Inspection of Abdul Manan Secondary School Construction Project in Kapisa Province: Insufficient Planning, Safety Problems, and Poor Quality Control Affect Project Results

Why SIGAR Did This Inspection –

SIGAR conducts inspections of Afghanistan infrastructure reconstruction projects to determine whether U.S. funds are used appropriately, contract terms are met, adequate oversight is provided, and the project can be maintained upon turnover to Afghan authorities.

What SIGAR Inspected -

In June and August 2009, SIGAR inspected the Abdul Manan Secondary School construction project located in a remote part of Nijrab District, Kapisa Province, Afghanistan. At a cost of \$250,000, this project is being built with Commander's Emergency Response Program (CERP) funds. Proposed by the Kapisa Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT), the project was approved for implementation in August 2008. The contract for this project centers on the construction of a two-story school building with a capacity for 800 students.

What SIGAR Found –

- *Inadequate Contract Preparation:* The initial contract statement of work was deficient because it did not include two major construction elements for the school compound—a perimeter security wall and security guard house. These omissions were corrected by a contract modification in May 2009 which raised the price of the project by \$42,000 from the original \$208,000 cost. Additionally, the contract signed in the fall of 2008 awarded the project to the Provincial Director of Education. This award was subsequently determined to be in violation of CERP guidelines requiring a termination of the contract and re-bid of the project.
- *Defective Project Execution:* SIGAR found several instances of poor quality construction including substandard masonry work. SIGAR also found numerous examples of safety violations including workers without the required personal safety gear.
- *Insufficient Project Quality Control and Quality Assurance Measures in Place:* The Quality Control Plan submitted by the contractor was insufficient to ensure quality construction of a multi-level building project such as this school. Required progress reports were often not filed. In addition, SIGAR found that the PRT's Quality Assurance Program was inadequate during the initial stages of this project primarily due to the relatively few times PRT representatives visited the construction site. Since SIGAR's initial visit, however, quality assurance and control procedures have improved. For example, when told by the PRT Engineer that masonry work was unacceptable, the contractor replaced the substandard work with new construction. Following examination of this project, we questioned knowledgeable officials at the Regional Command, Task Force, and PRT as to whether standardized quality assurance guidelines that can be used by personnel responsible for project management at the PRT are available. SIGAR found that standardized quality assurance program guidelines for CERP-funded projects do not exist. Such standard guidelines would help avoid the types of inadequate oversight and quality assurance problems observed by SIGAR during this inspection.

What SIGAR Recommends - That the Commander, United States Forces-Afghanistan and the Commander, Kapisa PRT:

- Take actions to correct the multiple deficiencies noted in this report. This should start with ensuring both the statement of work and the design plan for this project reflect specific construction requirements such as site location and contractor capabilities.
- Develop standardized quality assurance guidelines that can be used to manage this and other CERP funded projects.

For more information, contact SIGAR Public affairs at (703) 602-8742 or PublicAffairs@sigar.mil



Photos illustrating substandard excavation and masonry work.

The photo at left shows the rear wall of the school structure constructed adjacent to the vertical wall of the excavation, leaving no room for the security perimeter wall. Contrary to accepted construction practices, the contractor was forced to excavate the area around the wall after it was built.

The photo at the right is an example of substandard masonry work which had to be demolished and rebuilt. (Photos provided by SIGAR)

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Inspection Objectives

SIGAR conducts inspections of Afghanistan infrastructure reconstruction projects to determine whether U.S. funds are used appropriately, contract terms are met, adequate oversight is provided, and the project can be maintained upon turnover to Afghan authorities.

SIGAR inspected the Abdul Manan Secondary School construction project managed by the Kapisa Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT), which is a component of United States Forces-Afghanistan (USFOR-A), between June and August 2009 and conducted onsite inspections of the school construction work on June 21 and August 12, 2009.

Details on our inspection scope and methodology are provided in Appendix A.

Project Background

This education infrastructure project was proposed by the Kapisa Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) pursuant to a request from the Kapisa Provincial Development Council in the summer of 2008. The project is part of a larger school construction initiative approved for implementation in August 2008 with funding provided by the Commanders' Emergency Response Program (CERP).¹

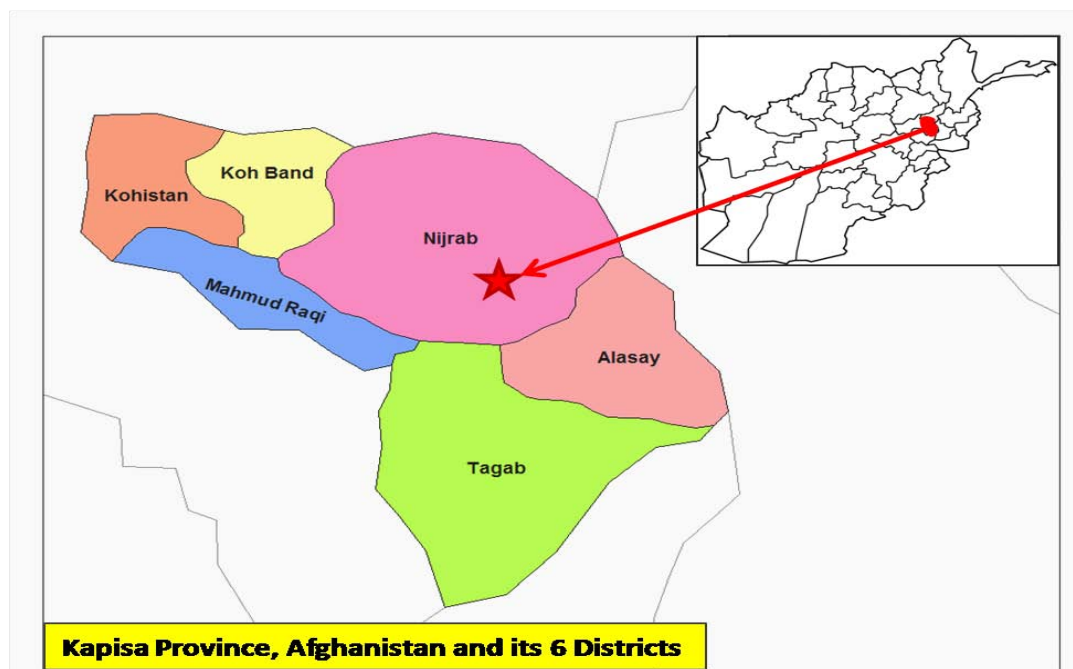


Figure 1: The Abdul Manan School is located in the mountainous Nijrab District of Kapisa Province shown by the red star. (Map provided by the Afghanistan Information Management System)

¹ This initiative was directed by Regional Command East, the higher headquarters of the Kapisa PRT and one of five regional commands that comprise the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force within Afghanistan. Regional Command East serves as the headquarters for the Combined Joint Task Force located at Bagram Air Field which reports to USFOR-A.



Site Photo 1: View of the challenging terrain where the Abdul Manan School is being constructed. Extensive grading work was required at this site prior to construction. (Photo provided by SIGAR)

As part of this initiative, 12 school construction projects have been initiated over the past 18 months in Kapisa Province.

Contract Requirements, Standards, and Timing

The location for the school compound was chosen because it was unused government land but it is far from ideal for construction work. In discussions with the Provincial Director of Education, SIGAR was told that this was the only parcel of land in the community that was available to place the school. At an elevation of nearly 6,000 feet and located on the side of a bare mountain, the site is positioned approximately 200 meters up the side of a steep slope in an area prone to rock and mud slides. In order to prepare the site for construction, an access road had to be built and extensive excavation work that included cutting a level shelf off the side of the mountain had to be performed.

The contract had to be modified because the original version left out both the perimeter security wall and a guard house from the statement of work. These are required structures for all schools built in Afghanistan, based on Ministry of Education standards. In its present form, the contract includes the construction of a two story, 16 classroom school building capable of serving over 800 students, along with associated structures including a power generation building that will house a 10 kilowatt diesel fuel generator; a 10 stall latrine; a hand operated water pump and reservoir; a stone masonry security perimeter wall; a guard house; and concrete walkways. The contractor is also responsible for site preparation; removal of rubble and refuse; and the manufacture and installation of 800 student bench desks.

The statement of work specifies that the project should be completed within 270 days of the notice-to-proceed date of January 18, 2009. Construction effectively began in late April and has progressed slowly since.

SIGAR Inspection Findings

SIGAR found that the Abdul Manan Secondary School project is significantly behind schedule, over original cost estimates, and has not been in compliance with the quality of work standards as required in the statement of work and the national Ministry of Education design plans. SIGAR inspectors raised concerns about the quality of portions of the completed work and the structural integrity of the school building due to its location on a steep slope without a proper retaining wall to protect the building from rock falls, rushing water, and mud slides that occur annually in the spring months. SIGAR partly attributes these problems to a general lack of adequate quality control and assurance procedures.

Inadequate Contract Preparation and Award

The initial contract was signed in September 2008 and was awarded to the Provincial Director of Education as the prime contractor. Revised guidelines prepared by U.S. Central Command issued in late 2008 prohibited line ministries from serving as contracting parties for projects funded by CERP. As a result, the original contract was terminated and a new contract was put out for bid, delaying the start of the project for 5 months.

A new contract was executed with a Notice to Proceed issued on 18 January 2009 for a performance period of 270 days. The contract specified that construction of the school and its additional supporting structures would be in accordance with both the contract Statement of Work and standards established by the Afghanistan Ministry of Education.

Originally budgeted at \$208,000 the project increased to over \$250,000 in May 2009 because several key required structural components had to be added to the contract. These additions included the construction of a guard building and a stone masonry perimeter wall, structures that are required for every school built in Afghanistan, according to Ministry of Education standards.

At the time of the SIGAR on-site visit in August, the contractor had already spent over 200 days of the 270 days allowed by the contract. SIGAR believes that the contractor will be unlikely to complete the work on time.

Defective Project Execution

SIGAR found numerous violations of basic construction practices. Examples include the mixing of concrete by hand instead of in a mechanical mixer as required by the Statement of Work. Of particular concern is the stream located directly below the school site that is used as a source for potable and irrigation water for the local community. As the design plan is currently configured, it appears that the discharge from the 10-stall latrine serving almost 1,000 students will eventually contaminate the stream. Although SIGAR found evidence that this concern was repeatedly raised with the contractor by the PRT, no documented solution could be found in the project file that addressed and corrected this deficiency. At the time SIGAR visited the project, construction of the latrine at the original site was continuing.

SIGAR also found that although the contractor made extensive mention of safety requirements for his workers in the project work plan, numerous safety violations were noted by SIGAR. These violations included workers without head, eye, hand, or foot protection. (See Site Photo 2)



Site Photo 2: Laborers working on the project with no personal protective equipment such as hardhats, gloves or, in some cases, even shoes. (Photo provided by SIGAR)



Site Photo 3: View of SIGAR inspectors with the PRT Quality Assurance Representative examining completed work. SIGAR found that the floor of the room had not been compacted to prepare it for the concrete slab-on-grade. (Photo provided by SIGAR)



Site Photo 4: View of PRT Quality Assurance Representative testing the mortar work for durability. Such testing is critical to assess if the materials used meet the standards specified in the statement of work. In the case that materials do not meet these standards, the Quality Assurance Representative can order the contractor to redo the work which might involve tearing down already constructed sections of the project. (Photo provided by SIGAR)

Insufficient Quality Assurance and Control Practices

SIGAR's review of project documentation found only intermittent submissions of progress reports and photographs from the early stages of this project. Such documentation should be submitted on a regular basis as noted in the statement of work and the contractor's Quality Control Plan. This lack of consistent reporting on the part of the contractor, compounded by the inability of the PRT Quality Assurance Representative to be present for only about an hour every two weeks, has left the construction to continue largely without proper oversight.

This lack of quality control documentation was reflected by a lack of consistent performance and construction methods that had to be corrected late in the project life cycle. Examples include the contractor stating he was ready to pour concrete into the floors of rooms that had not yet been properly compacted (see Site Photo 3) and the PRT Quality Assurance representative having to direct several portions of completed brick work to be demolished due to use of improper mortar mixture in their construction (see Site Photo 4).

Since our initial visit to this project in June 2009, SIGAR notes that project oversight on the part of the PRT has improved. This improved oversight included additional presence and mentoring of the contractor by PRT engineer staff. As a result, SIGAR notes that the contractor's quality performance has also improved.

SIGAR asked the PRT Quality Assurance Representative if standardized guidance for conducting quality assurance checks exist. When told that he was unaware of any such guidance, SIGAR further queried knowledgeable officials at both the Combined Joint Task Force and USFOR-A if they were aware of any such standardized quality assurance guidance. In both cases, officials questioned knew of no such guidance. As a result SIGAR concluded that if the PRT had such guidelines a number of the early project management and construction deficiencies noted in this report might have been avoided.

Conclusions

This inspection revealed a number of significant deficiencies that include inadequate contract preparation, defective project execution, and insufficient quality assurance and control practices. Collectively, these deficiencies have contributed to a project which is significantly behind schedule, over original cost estimates, and has had problems meeting the quality of work required in the statement of work. SIGAR also found that standardized quality assurance program guidelines for CERP funded projects do not exist. We believe such standard guidelines would help avoid the types of inadequate oversight and quality assurance problems observed during this inspection.

Recommendations

SIGAR recommends that the Commander, U.S. Forces-Afghanistan and Commander, Kapisa PRT:

- Take actions to correct the multiple deficiencies noted in this report. This should start with ensuring both the statement of work and the design plan for this project reflect specific construction requirements such as site location and contractor capabilities.
- Develop standardized quality assurance guidelines that can be used to manage this and other CERP funded projects.

Agency Comments and Response

USFOR-A and the Kapisa PRT provided comments on a draft of this report. These comments highlighted the need for CERP guidance to ensure that statements of work accurately address the project requirements indicated in the basic design plans that the Afghan Ministry of Education issues for school construction projects. SIGAR believes that the PRT's response that noted "standard ministry designs must be tailored to each construction site" is the correct approach that will assist the PRT in providing more effective oversight and project management. SIGAR revised its recommendations contained in the draft report to focus on the statement of work for this project.

USFOR-A concurred with the information provided in the draft report citing the need for standard quality assurance procedures. The Kapisa PRT partially concurred with this recommendation and stated that although standardized quality assurance plans would be beneficial they should be flexible enough to allow the PRT engineers on-site to tailor specifics to each project's unique requirements. In its response, the PRT pointed to potential complications that can affect the implementation of a quality assurance plan such as limited mobility and seasonal constraints.

SIGAR acknowledges the need for flexibility in any standardized quality assurance plan to allow the onsite team to manage specific and unique conditions for each project. However, contractual requirements specified in statements of work must serve as the basis for project management and quality assurance.

(This report was conducted under the SIGAR Inspection Project Code SIGAR-002c-I)

Appendix A - Scope and Methodology

SIGAR performed the site visits for this project inspection in June 2009 and August 2009 in accordance with Quality Standards for Inspections issued by the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency. The inspection team included the Assistant Inspector General for Inspections and an engineer inspector.

In performing this project inspection, SIGAR:

- Reviewed contract documentation to include the following:
 - Contract W914BN-09-R-RP09 issued by the Kapisa-Parwan PRT on January 10, 2009; relevant purchase orders, invoices, and vouchers dealing with the project; the Statement of Work with all required specifications and accompanying documentation.
 - All documentation prepared and presented by the contractor dealing with the construction of the school project.
 - The Project Survey and Assessment Plan including design drawings and specifications, PRT quality assurance reports and records, construction progress photographs and other documentation brought to the inspection team's attention.
- Interviewed the previous and current PRT Commanders and other knowledgeable members of the PRT staff; the contractor and work foreman who were present during the on-site visits to the school construction site made in both June 2009 and August 2009; and the Kapisa Provincial Director of Education.
- Conducted onsite inspections of the school on June 20 and August 12, 2009. Personnel from the Kapisa PRT (including the previous and current PRT Engineer and members of their staff) accompanied SIGAR inspectors during these visits.

Appendix B – Abbreviations

CERP	Commander's Emergency Response Program
PRT	Provincial Reconstruction Team
SIGAR	Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction
USFOR-A	United States Forces-Afghanistan

Appendix C – Agency Comments



HEADQUARTERS
UNITED STATES FORCES-AFGHANISTAN
KABUL, AFGHANISTAN
APO AE 09356

USFOR-A DCDR-S

24 September 2009

MEMORANDUM FOR Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, 400 Army
Navy Drive, Arlington, VA 22202

SUBJECT: USFOR-A Response to Draft Report: Inspection of Abdul Manan Secondary
School Construction Project in Kapisa Province: Poor Contract Preparation And Execution
Contributes To Delays And Substandard Construction (SIGAR Inspection 09-04).

1. Reference Final – Draft Report SIGAR Inspection-09-04, Special Inspector General for
Afghanistan Reconstruction, subject same as above.
2. This memorandum formally responds to recommendations within the draft report.
3. Point of contact for this action is USFOR-A IG, Col Lawrence Brundidge, DSN: 318-237-
1678.

Encl

USFOR-A Response to Draft Report 09-04

JOHN R. MCMAHON

BG, USA

Director of Engineering

United States Forces- Afghanistan

[Note: When the draft of this report was sent for agency comment, it was tentatively designated as SIGAR Inspection 09-04. Since receiving agency comments, this report has been re-designated SIGAR Inspection 10-2 as it is being issued in FY 2010.]

SIGAR DRAFT – 09-04**“Inspection of Abdul Manan School Construction Project in Kapisa Province: Poor Contract Preparation and Execution Contributes to Delays and Substandard Construction”****USFOR-A COMMENTS
TO THE DRAFT REPORT**

RECOMMENDATION 1: SIGAR recommends that the Commander, US Forces-Afghanistan review and revise as necessary, CERP guidance and regulations to ensure statements of work fully reflect the particular design plans that each construction project requires. (Page 5 of SIGAR report)

USFOR-A RESPONSE: USFOR-A concurs with information provided in this SIGAR Report.

CERP guidance should reflect requirements for personnel engaged in construction project development and construction oversight after award be retained to guarantee requisite professional skills for mission success. Personnel without these credentials should not be permitted to enact projects in this area. For example, PRTs without engineers and construction inspectors drawn from military organizations with practice in these areas as part of their normal duties while at home stations, should not be allowed to conduct construction related CERP initiatives.

KP PRT RESPONSE: Kapisa PRT concurs with information provided in this SIGAR Report. The initial stages of this contract should have insisted on having an accurate and detailed site plan outlining every inch of the site to include all attachment buildings and the primary structure. We have worked extensively with the contractor to provide updated plans and designs; many of the designs submitted are not adequate and require several revisions before being accepted by GIRoA and/or the PRT. The standard ministry designs must be tailored to each construction site. Contractors, through mistakes and mentorship from the PRT, have learned that initial preparations are critical to project success.

RECOMMENDATION 2: SIGAR recommends that the Commander, US Forces-Afghanistan develop and issue standardized Quality Assurance Guidelines that can be used by personnel responsible for oversight of CERP funded projects. (Page 5 of SIGAR report)

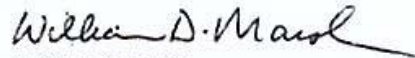
USFOR-A RESPONSE: USFOR-A concurs with information provided in this SIGAR Report.

Standardized Quality Assurance Guidelines for use to support CERP projects managed by PRTs with trained engineers and construction inspectors, along with standardized Quality Assurance Guidelines, such as those used by the Afghanistan Engineer District, will help promote quality oversight.

KP PRT RESPONSE: Kapisa PRT partially concurs with information provided in this SIGAR Report. The Kapisa PRT engineers tailor quality assurance plans to the contract ensuring that all aspects of the contract are performed accurately and with the best quality. If standard Quality Assurance guidelines are considered and implemented then they need to allow for the engineers on the ground to have the flexibility to assess in accordance with each specific contract. Quality standards should be created and enforced through GIRoA, allowing the Line Directors in each respective province to take ownership over each project. Due to our mobility constraints and seasonal factors, the PRT inherently has limited time on each objective project site. This limited interaction with the contractor's can lead to quality assurance issues that we have attempted to resolve through bi-weekly contractor meetings and visits from GIRoA officials and local national engineers. The PRT hosts professional development sessions for our current contractors and works with government officials to establish quality assurance guidelines that have been proven to work throughout Kapisa Province.



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SIGAR Mission and Contact Information

SIGAR Mission: The mission of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction is to enhance oversight of programs for the reconstruction of Afghanistan by conducting independent and objective audits, inspections, and investigations on the use of taxpayer dollars and related funds. SIGAR works to provide accurate and balanced information, evaluations, analysis, and recommendations to help the U.S. Congress, U.S. agencies, and other decision-makers to make informed oversight, policy, and funding decisions to:

- Improve effectiveness of the overall reconstruction strategy and its component programs;
- Improve management and accountability over funds administered by U.S. and Afghan agencies and their contractors;
- Improve contracting and contract management processes;
- Prevent fraud, waste, and abuse; and,
- Advance U.S. interests in reconstructing Afghanistan.

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